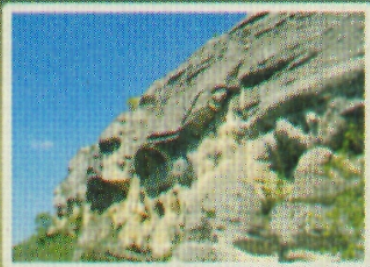


DECHKO LECHEV



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MADARA

SECOND REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

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Madara National Historical and Archaeological Reserve is one of the most popular sites of its kind in Bulgaria because of its rich history, numerous monuments and the unique rock-carved relief of the Madara Horseman.

Various tribes and peoples from the 4th millennium BC until the 15th century AD inhabited the site of Madara. There are traces of human habitation dating back to the Copper and Stone Age, of Thracians, Romans and Byzantines. Various archaeological monuments belonging to the First and the Second Bulgarian states have been also discovered. The wealth of ancient cultural strata justified the very first researchers of Madara to call it the 'Bulgarian Troy'.

The character of a considerable part of the archaeological remains testifies to Madara being a major religious centre throughout

history. The imposing rocks and their magic ambience attracted man from earliest antiquity until medieval times. Man not only inhabited the caves and the foot of the stone massif but he also used them for religious purposes as an expression of his reverence for nature irrespective of the cults he worshipped.

The Big cave has preserved indisputable evidence of the existence of a Thracian shrine in it. Its discoverers dated it to the 2nd century BC and were of the opinion that it was dedicated to the three nymphs – of the water, the forest and nature, to Dionysus, Heracles and Artemis, whose representations in relief were found in the cave. Later research dated the nymph composition to the 4th-3rd centuries BC.

Madara remained a religious centre in the Early and Late Middle Ages favourably influenced not only by its auspicious natural surroundings, but

also by the proximity to the capitals of Pliska and Preslav. That was sufficient grounds for some experts to qualify Madara as a 'state religious centre' particularly important during the rule of the Bulgarian khans. The major heathen temple at Madara – a complex of buildings and a large sacred stone known as Daul tash is to be found at the foot of the rocks, to the northwest of the Horseman.

After the 9th century Madara continued as a religious centre and on the site of the former heathen temples there appeared Christian churches. A monastery complex was built on the ledge below Daul tash and up in the fortress on the plateau – a church.

During the time of the Second Bulgarian State one of the largest rock monasteries in Bulgaria was founded. It comprised over 150 monastic cells, tombs and a rock church.

Madara National Historical and Ar-

chaeological Reserve is a fascinating place with its exceptional beauty of nature – the majestic rocks and caves, the springs and its varied flora and fauna which boasts some rare plant species.

The unusual combination of unique historic sites and unique nature has made Madara Reserve and attraction for both Bulgarian and foreign tourists.



RAFAIL POPOV

(1876 – 1940)

An archaeologist, paleontologist, a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1937 and of a number of foreign archaeo-

logical societies. For many years a Director of the National Archaeological Museum and one of the founders of the Archaeological Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Recognized as the pioneer scholar of prehistoric studies in Bulgarian historiography. The first to discover traces of Paleolithic Era in the Bulgarian lands. As a result of his important findings in the Kodzadermenska mound near the town of Shumen there appeared a new concept, 'Kodzadermenska culture', in Bulgarian historical studies. He was a founder member and the first curator of the Shumen Museum (1902-1909).

Rafail Popov headed the initial archaeological excavations at a prehistoric site at Madara in 1902, which with some interruptions continued until the end of the 30s of the 20th century. The results of his work appeared in a number of publications.



KAREL SKORPIL

(1859 – 1944)

A Bulgarian scientist of Czech origin. One of the pioneers of Bulgarian archaeology. An extraordinary member of the

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1918 and of the Masarykova Academy in Prague.

Karel Skorpil carried out the original excavation work on the ruins at Aboba (Pliska of today) in 1890 – 1900 and unearthed the remains of the capital of the Danube Bulgarian State – Pliska. He was recognized as its discoverer.

Skorpil was one of the most ardent protectors of Bulgarian historical remains. He initiated the foundation of the Bulgarian Historical Monuments Archaeological Society.

He is the author of over ten publications devoted to the archaeological research on Madara and the Madara Horseman relief.



IVAN MOLLOV

(1868 – 1953)

A founder member of the Archaeological Museum of Shumen and a close associate of R. Popov's. A Chairman of the Shumen Archaeological Club for almost 30 years. As a long-standing secretary of the Bulgarian Historical Monuments Society he made a valuable contribution to the organization of the excavations at Madara. He personally participated in them and published materials on the results of the archaeological research



NIKOLA MUSHMOV

(1869 – 1942)

One of the best known Bulgarian numismatists and founders of the Bulgarian Numismatic Society, a member of the French Academy of Sciences, a member of a number of European archaeological institutes and numismatic societies. The author of several articles on the coins found at Madara in scientific publications.



GAVRIL KATSAROV

(1874 – 1958)

A historian and an archaeologist, a specialist in Thracian culture and religion. A Professor, an Academician (1909), member of foreign academies and societies, Chancellor of Sofia University 1927 – 1928).

D. Katsarov did research on the Madara Horseman and the Thracian votive tablets bearing the image of horsemen.



DIMITER DECHEV

(1877 – 1958)

A philologist, a specialist in antique literature and classical languages. Studied Latin and Greek epigraphic monuments, the ancient history of the peoples inhabiting the Balkan Peninsula and the Thracian language.

Dimiter Delchev studied the inscriptions found at Madara and the Greek inscription around the Horseman.



BOGDAN FILOV

(1883 – 1945)

A Professor of archaeology from 1920. From 1921 a Director of the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute. From 1937 to 1944 – a Chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Studied Proto-Bulgarian art. B. Filov has publications on the Madara Horseman and Hercules' relief at Madara.



VESELIN BESHEVLIEV

(1900 – 1992)

An outstanding Bulgarian philologist and historian. A Professor, a Doctor, a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1941. His work was in the field of Classical Greek, Latin and Thracian epigraphy, in the antique and medieval history of the Bulgarian and the Balkan area. One of his major works is 'Old Bulgarian Inscriptions'. His most numerous publications are on the inscriptions of the Madara Horseman, to whose deciphering he has made a great contribution.



GEZA FEHER

(1890 – 1955)

A Hungarian scientist, philologist, professor, member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1943. His scientific interests were predominantly in the ancient history of the Magyars - the period before their settlement in the Carpathian region. Geza Feher's work brought him in touch with the old history of the Bulgarian. Thus he got interested in the old Bulgarian settlements from 12th – 10th centuries, came to Bulgaria and stayed here for over two decades.

GEZA Feher participated in the archaeological expeditions at Pliska and Kalugeritsa and did special research on the Madara Horseman and in its inscriptions. He published the results of his study in 1928 and 1931 in monographs.



**IVAN
VELKOV**

(1981 – 1958)

An archaeologist, who worked in the field of classical history. He carried out archaeological study on Thracian mounds and Bulgarian and Byzantine settlements. Two of his major works are 'Dead Cities' (1933) and 'On the track of the Centuries' (1956). He did archaeological research at Madara and wrote about the shrine below the Big cave and the Madara Fortress.



**VASIL
MIKOV**

(1891 – 1970)

He specialized in prehistoric archaeology. His most significant works are 'The Idol Sculpture of the Neolithic Age in Bulgaria' (1935) and 'The Origins of the Domed Tombs in Thrace' (1955). Studied the finds in the burial mounds and the representations on the rocks at Madara.



**ALEXANDER
RASHENOV**

(1892 – 1938)

Architect Doctor Rashenov is a pioneer in the study of medieval Bulgarian architecture. For many years he headed the People's Museum in Sofia and together with archaeologists worked in the unearthing and conservation of medieval buildings, fortifications installations, churches, etc.

There are two publications devoted to his finds at Madara: 'Madara Construction' and 'The Pottery Kiln at Madara'.



**NIKOLA
MAVRODINOV**

(1904 – 1958)

An archaeologist, art historian, a Professor, corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences from 1946. He studied medieval Bulgarian art and the art of the Revival period of Bulgaria. A Director of the National Archaeological Museum. Published the results of his research at Madara and the Proto-Bulgarian 'artistic industry' as revealed from finds at Madara.



**KRASTYO
MITYAEV**

(1892 –1966)

An archaeologist and art critic, a specialist in medieval history. He did research and published material on medieval Bulgarian and Byzantine culture and art. A considerable part of his published matter is devoted to the Madara Horseman, medieval art and crafts in general and in particular to artistic ceramics and metal sculpture. The first to publicize the gold belt ornaments found at Madara and the lead archbishop's seal, known as 'madarski' - discovered at the end of the 20s of the 20th century.



**TODOR
GERASIMOV**

(1903 –1974)

One of Bulgaria's most renowned numismatists, an archaeologist. Worked in the field of Classical, Byzantine and Bulgarian numismatics and the study of seals. Did research on Thracian culture. His major work on Madara is 'The Study of the Madara Rock Relief' (1956).



**IVAN
DUICHEV**

(1907 –1986)

An eminent historian in medieval studies, an academician from 1981. His field of study is the culture and art of Medieval Bulgaria and Byzantium. Two of his major works are 'From Old Bulgarian Letters' and 'The Bulgarian Middle Ages'. A winner of the Herder Prize (1973). Published articles on heathen and Christian Madara and its epigraphic and numismatic monuments.



**TSVETANA
DREMSIZOVA-
NELCHINOVA**
(1917 – 1998)

An archaeologist, a graduate in classical philology. In 1946 started work at the District History Museum of Shumen. From 1951- 1963 she was its curator and director. In 1963 she became a research associate and took an active part in mapping the sights of the shumen area.

Tsvetana Dremsizova is amongst the longest standing reasearchers of Madara. She did excavation work on the food store at the foot of the Big Cave, the Roman Villa and others. She devoted scores of publications to the discoveries made during her work.



**VERA
ANTONOVA**
(1917 – 2002)

An archaeologist, a graduate in classical philology. From 1951 to 1987 worked at the Shumen History Museum as an assistant, curator, research associate and senior associate in the Department of Medieval Archaeology. Participated in the drawing up of the archaeological map of the Shumen area.

Working in a team with Tsvetana Dremsizova she made a great contribution to the archaeological study of the antique and medieval sites at Madara and in publicizing its archaeological wealth.





The rocks of Madara 1928



Excavations in the Big Cave –1928



Rafail Popov during
excavations at Madara



Karel Skorpil amidst ruins at the foot
of the Big Cave

THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD OF MADARA

The earliest archaeological study of Madara, organized by Rafail Popov in 1902, was connected with the pre-history of the site. He carried out several expeditions until 1932. On the basis of his findings and the level of prehistoric study of the time he dated the earliest settlements at Madara to the 5th – 4th millennia of the Early Neolithic Age.

The archaeologist Vasil Mikov who studied the site in 1934 accepted the dating to the Early Neolith but he referred it to the 3rd millennium BC.

After archaeological drilling in 1954 Georgi Iliev Geor-giev corrected the dating of the prehistoric settlement to the Aeneolithic era in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC i. e. to the time known as the Copper-Stone Age. The Madara prehistoric settlement was situated in the Small Cave, in the Big Cave and at its foot on both sides of the spring and on the left side of the stream.



Prehistoric axes –
5th millenium BC

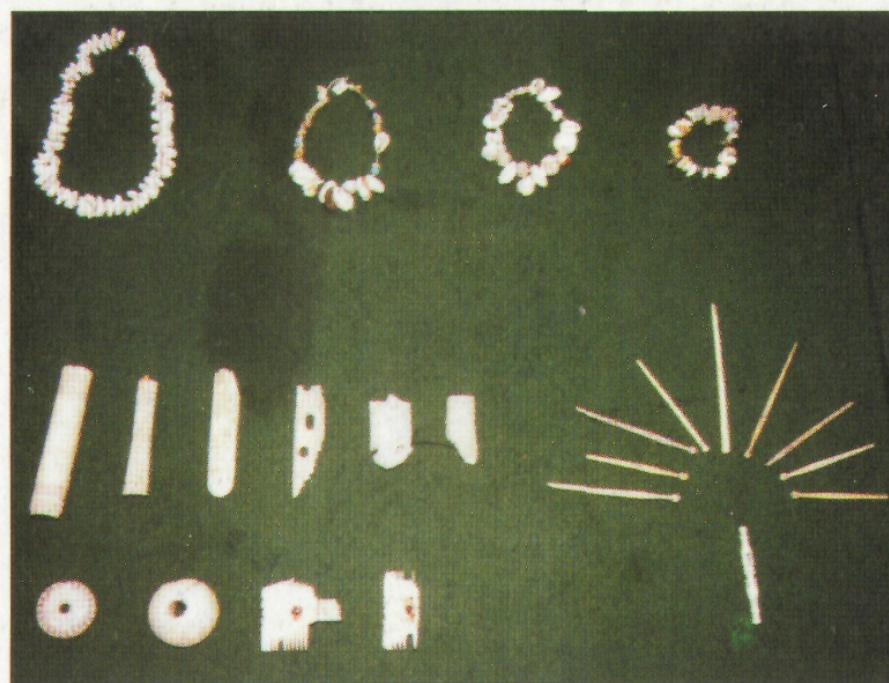


Prehistoric tools –
6th –4th millenia BC





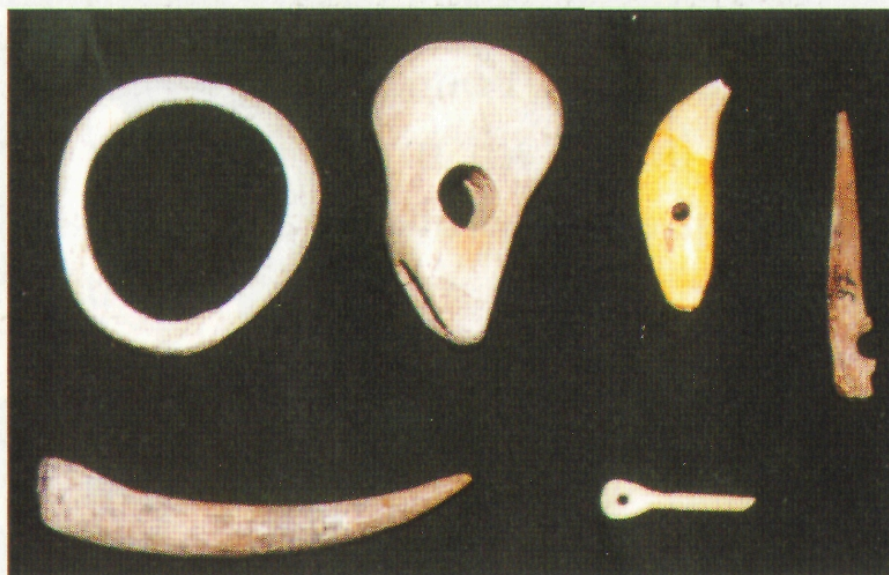
Prehistoric tools –
5th millenium BC



Prehistoric bone articles



Prehistoric tools –
1st millenium BC



Prehistoric bone articles



The Small Cave – 6th –4th millenia BC

THE ANTIQUE PERIOD OF MADARA

R. Popov first registered traces of the antique period of Madara at the beginning of the 30s of the 20th century during the excavation work on two Thracian burial mounds upon the plateau. The burial articles provide information about the trade carried out between the local Thracians and the Greek colonies on the coast of Asia Minor and the Black Sea. The archaeological remains from the everyday life of the Thracians at the foot of the rocks and on the site of the Roman Villa testify that the mounds on the plateau belonged to a large Thracian community after the 4th century B.C.

Thracian sanctuaries are reliable evidence of the existence of Thracian habitation.

The earliest shrine to be discovered was in the Big Cave. According to researchers it was dedicated to the three nymphs – of the water, of the woods and nature as witnessed by a fragment of a slab bearing their representations and an inscription. There have also been found votive tablets with the picture of a Thracian horseman and a tablet bearing the image of Heracles (recumbent). In the Balabanov locality north of the rock relief there has recently been unearthed another large temple that



contained a big number of votive tablets with the horseman representation (some of them with inscriptions), sculptured figurines, the foundations of a building and others.

Traces of the Thracian culture at Madara continued until late antiquity.

The Antique period is marked by a powerful Roman influence. Actually the most remarkable architectural monument at Madara is the Roman Villa dated between the 2nd and 4th centuries. It is a complex of buildings, which were usually comprised by a rural estate in the European provinces of the Roman Empire. It probably belonged to a rich Thracian slave-owner.

On the flat land by the side of today's village of Kalugeritsa there was a large settlement with traces of Thracian and Roman cultures which is undoubtedly linked to the antique history of Madara.

The Thracian and Roman periods have left abundant pottery remains – kitchen articles, earthen lamps, bronze articles: rings, fibulas, fragments of decorations, tools, etc.

During the Late Antique period (around the 4th century) a fortress was built on the plateau which existed until the Ottoman invasion in the 14th century.



Marble tablet with the
image of Heracles –
2nd century



The zodiac from
the shrine



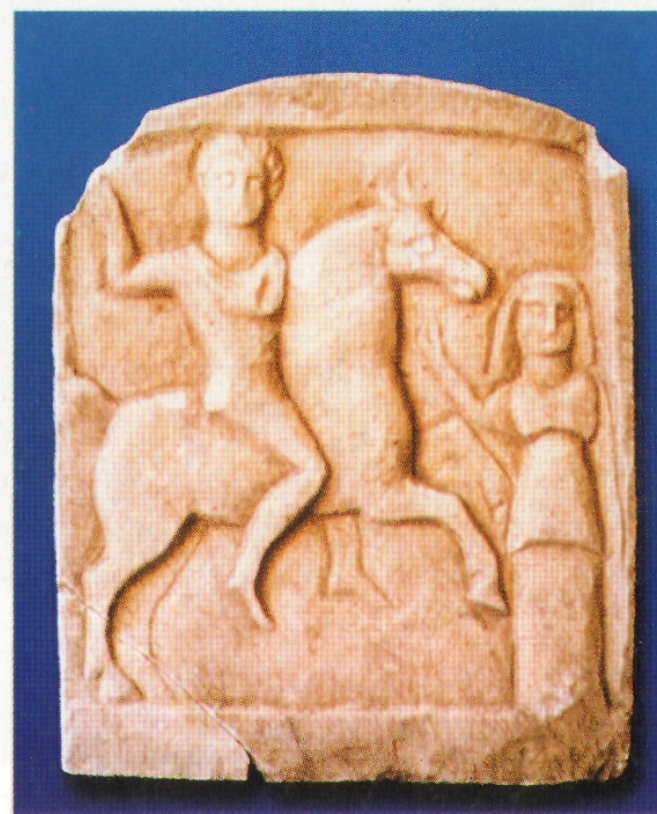
A Thracian vessel –
4th – 3rd centuries BC



A fragment of a table with a representation of
the three nymphs the Big Cave



The Big Cave with the shrine 5th – 1st centuries BC



Votive tablets of a Thracian horseman – 1st century BC – 4th century AD



In the Balabanov locality, about 1000 m northeast of the Horseman, there has been discovered part of a Thracian temple. The archaeological monument is situated on an inclined terrace at the foot of the stone massif of the plateau. During the initial expedition the foundations of two buildings were partially unearthed.

The temple was hewn in the rocks, it has a platform and steps leading to it. During the excavation work there were discovered fragments of luxury imported household pottery, glass vessels, entirely preserved and broken votive tablets bearing dedicatory inscriptions, fragments of marble reliefs, part of an inscription upon a limestone slab and bronze Roman coins.

On one of the votive tablets is the name of the goddess of fortune Tyuhe – a personification of abundance and prosperity and a symbol of the mutability of fortune, honoured as a patroness. Most probably the temple was dedicated to her.

Judging from the material remains the temple can be dated to the 1st – 4th centuries.

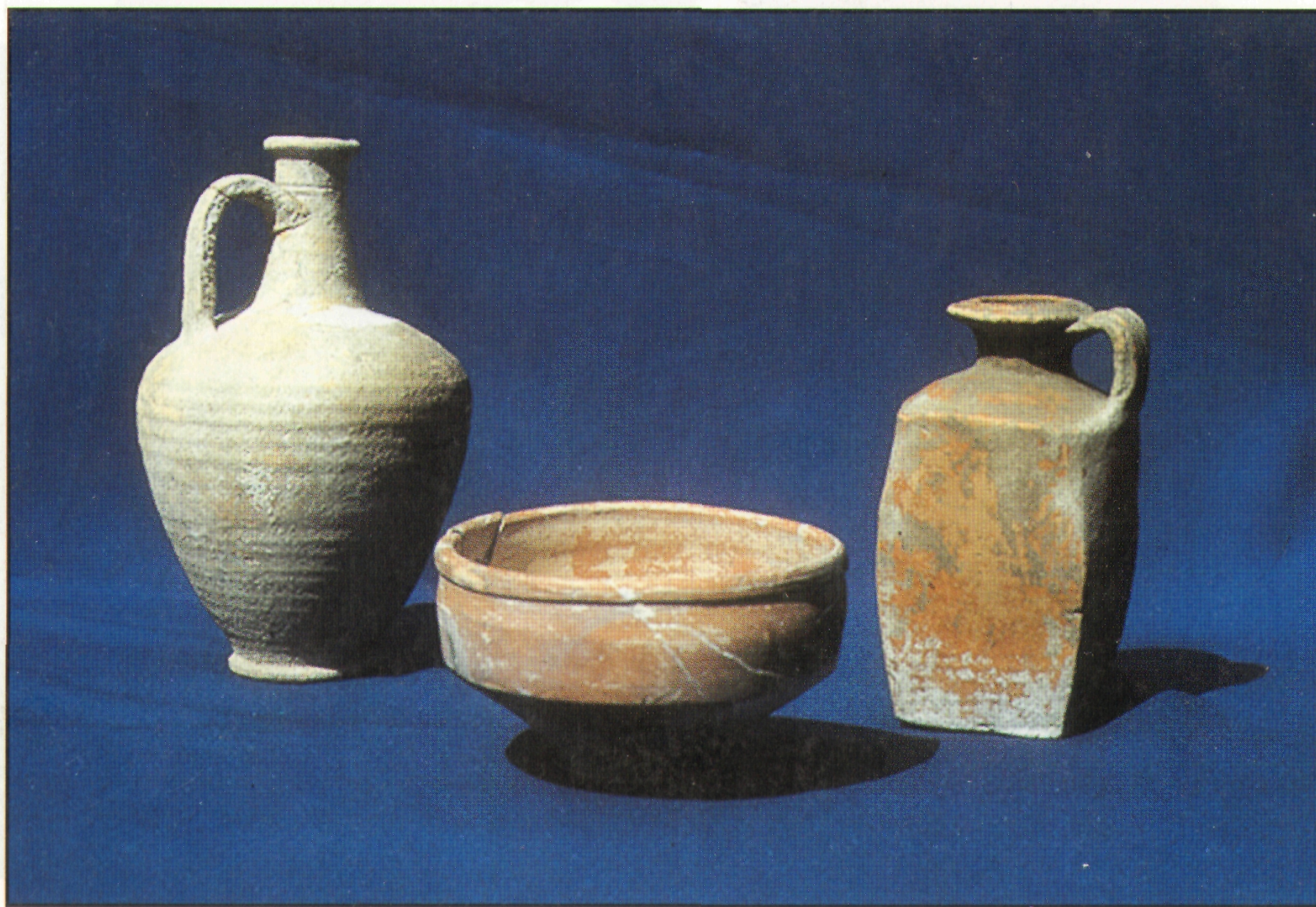


A marble head from the sanctuary in Balabanov locality 1st – 4th centuries



The Roman villa 2nd – 5th centuries. General view





Earthen vessels from the Roman villa 2nd –4th centuries



Earthen vessels
2nd – 3rd centuries



Earthen lamps
2nd – 3rd centuries

MEDIEVAL MADARA

The site continued being inhabited in the Middle Ages. Circumstances placed it in the centre of important historic events connected with the establishment of Danube Bulgaria and the fortunes of the nearby capitals Pliska and Preslav.

The study of the medieval sites started in the middle of the 20s of the last century with archaeological excavations on the terrace under the Horseman relief and continued for about ten years. Religious structures were uncovered belonging to Early- and Late-Christian churches, a heathen shrine from the time of the Proto-Bulgarians, a monastery complex from the 9th century and a medieval necropolis.

The Late-Antique fortress on the plateau preserved its importance and continued in use during both the Early- and Late- Middle Ages. The fortress was linked to the low ground, where the fresh water source and the food stores were, by means of a wooden stairway built in a fissure in the rock face. After the conversion to Christianity a church was built up in the fortress.

During the time of the Second Bulgarian State one of the largest rock monasteries in Bulgaria was carved with over 150 monastic cells and a rock





THE MADARA HORSEMAN ROCK RELIEF

church.

The most significant monument in the National Historical and Archaeological Reserve of Madara is the unique rock relief known as the Madara Horseman. The relief carved upon the face of the majestic rock at a height of 23m is a product of the Early Medieval Bulgarian art.

THE LEGEND ABOUT THE HORSEMAN

Even before it became known to science, the Horseman was well known to the local population who told legends about him. The first to write down those legends were Karel Skorpil and Konstantin Irecek.

According to one tradition a Latin king went hunting on the plateau, but out of carelessness fell off the rocks and got killed. His relatives decided to immortalize him by commissioning a master to carve his image on the rock face.

Another tradition added that the king ruled from Aboba (Pliska), the first Bulgarian capital. The name of the ruler was not mentioned.

A curious detail is that the local population, which until the 19th century was predominantly Turkish, identified the representation on the rock as St George, who was worshipped by the Moslems, too. Probably that was the reason it was spared by the invaders. On the day following St George's Day the ethnic Moslems from the area honoured the Saint by a feast and merrymaking held below the relief.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON THE HORSEMAN

The oldest written testimony to the existence of the Horseman is by the Armenian traveller Hugas Indzedziyan who crossed the Bulgarian lands on several occasions between 1792 and 1809. In his notes he says the following: 'In Matara on a high flat almost vertical rock there is an ancient horseman carved who is



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ΠΟΛΕ

said to have been there since the 9th century.' Indzedziyan probably got the dating from the local inhabitants, which means that even then the Horseman was considered to be a Bulgarian monument.

However, the discovery of the relief is attributed to the Hungarian scholar Felix Kanic in 1872 since he was the first to take a scientific interest in it. Unable to see the relief and the inscriptions from close-by, he used binoculars in order to read some of the words which, by mistake, he took for Latin and the relief as of Roman origin from the Empire period.

In 1884 Konstantin Irecek established, again with the help of binoculars, that there were more than one inscription, and that they were not in Latin but in Greek 'from Bulgarian heathen times'. He accepted the representation as a Thracian horseman.

Karel Skorpil did a more thorough study of the relief from a scaffold in 1895. Initially, he accepted Irecek's presumption of the Thracian origin of the monument. However, later he changed his view and came to the conclusion that the monument was 'from the first Bulgarian period and the Horseman is a representation of King Krum'. The Russian archaeologist Fyodor Uspenski shared that view. There is a rather truthful drawing of the relief and all the inscriptions left from that research.

In the meantime, the Viennese University sent a commission entrusted with the study of archaeological monuments in Bulgaria and it showed special interest in the Horseman.

In 1905 archaeologists from the People's Museum in Sofia made a plaster cast of the Horseman and the inscriptions but did not execute any further study of the site.



A photograph of the Horseman
from 1928



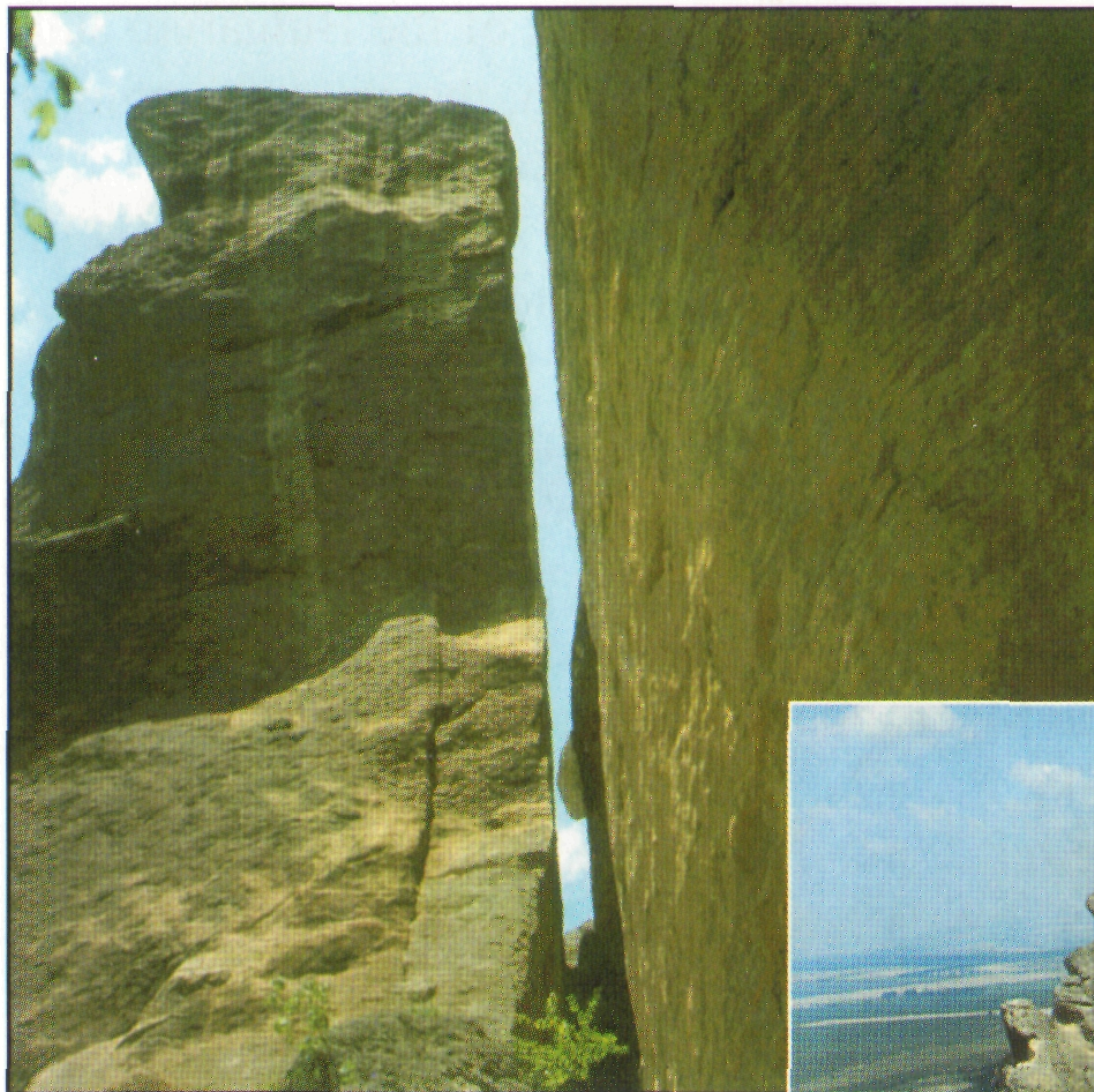
V.Beshevliev studying
the inscriptions, 1937

More extensive research on the relief and the inscriptions, headed by Geza Feher and Gavril Katsarov, started after 1924. Geza Feher reached the conclusion that the inscriptions were in four parts, that the Horseman was Khan Krum and the relief was commissioned by Khan Omurtag. Katsarov's basic conclusions were that the image was of Khan Krum and that the relief had nothing in common with the Thracian horsemen depicted on the votive tablets since the inscriptions and the equestrian figure and the tablets were executed at the same time. At that time Krastyo Mityaev also became convinced that the relief was carved in honour of Khan Krum on the order of Omurtag. The Russian scholar in Byzantine history N.P.Kondakov offered no identification of the personality of the Horseman but referred the monument to the time of the First Bulgarian State i.e. the beginning of the 8th century.

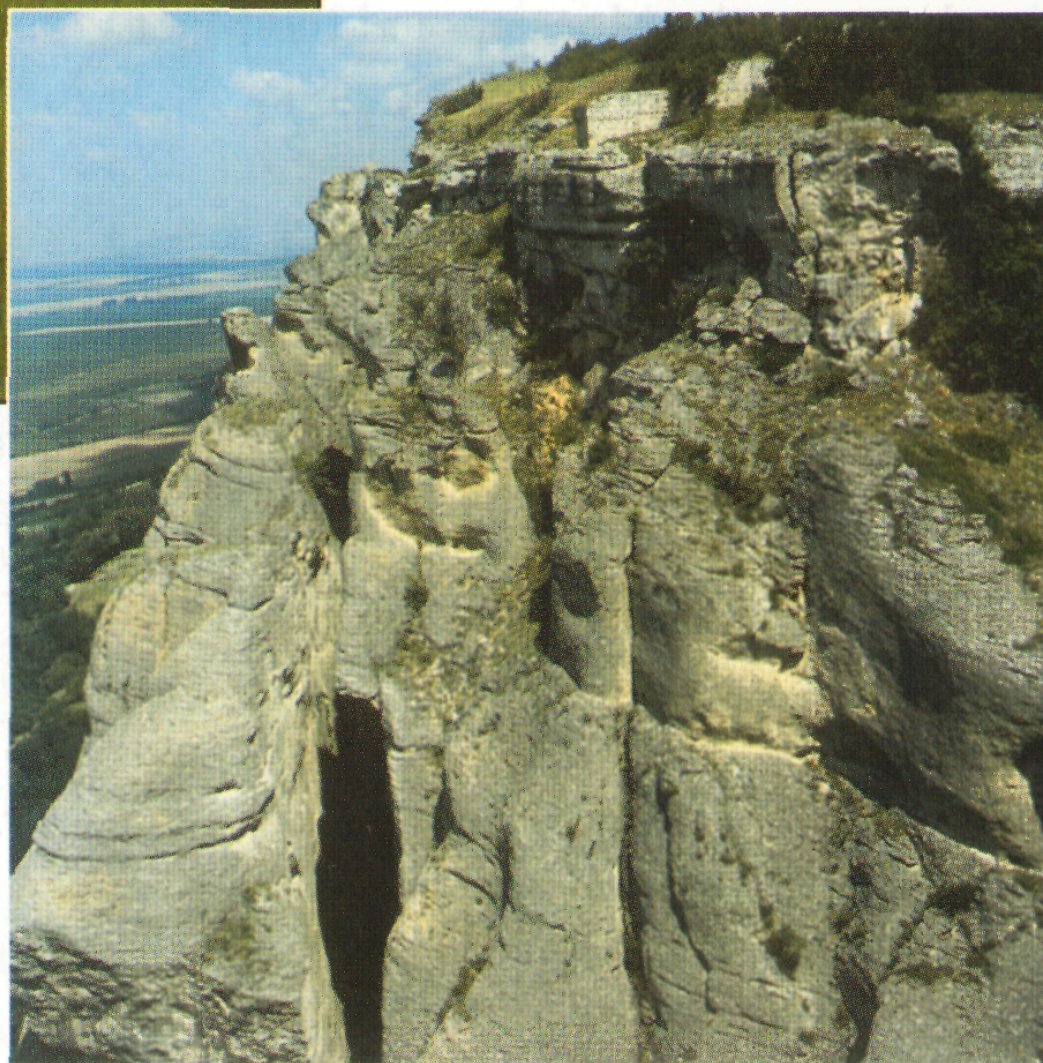
In a critical article in 1933 Veselin Beshevliev rejected the presumption that the Horseman was Khan Krum. His assertion and the differences in the decoded inscriptions started a dispute that was to go on for many years. In the next year Bogdan Filov published the results of his study in which, though not identifying the Horseman, he dated the composition definitely to the Early Bulgarian Middle Ages. In later research Khan Tervel, even Khan Asparuh were suggested as the possible protagonists of the Horseman.

In 1954 the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences organized a big expedition comprising about 30 specialists – epigraphists, archaeologists, historians, architects, etc in order to carry out a comprehensive and thorough study of the monument.

With no claim to giving a final and conclusive answer to the disputable issues concerning the monument, the scholars in the expedition came up with the hypothesis that the rock composition is a triumphal scene symbolizing the vic-



The path to the
fortress on the plateau



The rock ledge
and part of the
fortress wall

tory of a Bulgarian khan over Byzantium and the might of the Bulgarian state strengthening its position in the fight against it. The lion, the strongest animal, pierced by a spear is the defeated foe.

Collective effort has doubtlessly brought good results as demonstrated by the decoding of the inscriptions. Their study is considered to be the most satisfactory so far.

The first inscription, the one in front of the Horseman is from the time of Khan Tervel (701 –717). It testifies to the help rendered by the Bulgarian ruler to Justinian II in his reinstatement on the throne. That is the first domestic source to mention the name 'Bulgarians' and it substantiates the idea of a lineal connection between the Moesian and the Macedonian Bulgarians that, led by Tervel's uncles, had settled around Salonika.

The second inscription, on the left of the Horseman, is linked with the name of Krumesis (about 756). It refers to the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations and the tribute paid by Byzantium to Bulgaria.

The third inscription, to the right of the Horseman, is from the time of Khan Omurtag (814 – 831). From the several deciphered words it may be inferred that it refers to treaties between Bulgaria and Byzantium.

The Madara Horseman rock relief is unique in Europe. Because of that fact and its historic significance, in 1972 it was included in UNESCO list as a monument of world importance.



Part of the fortress wall
 –4th –15th centuries
 and the church –
 9th –10th centuries



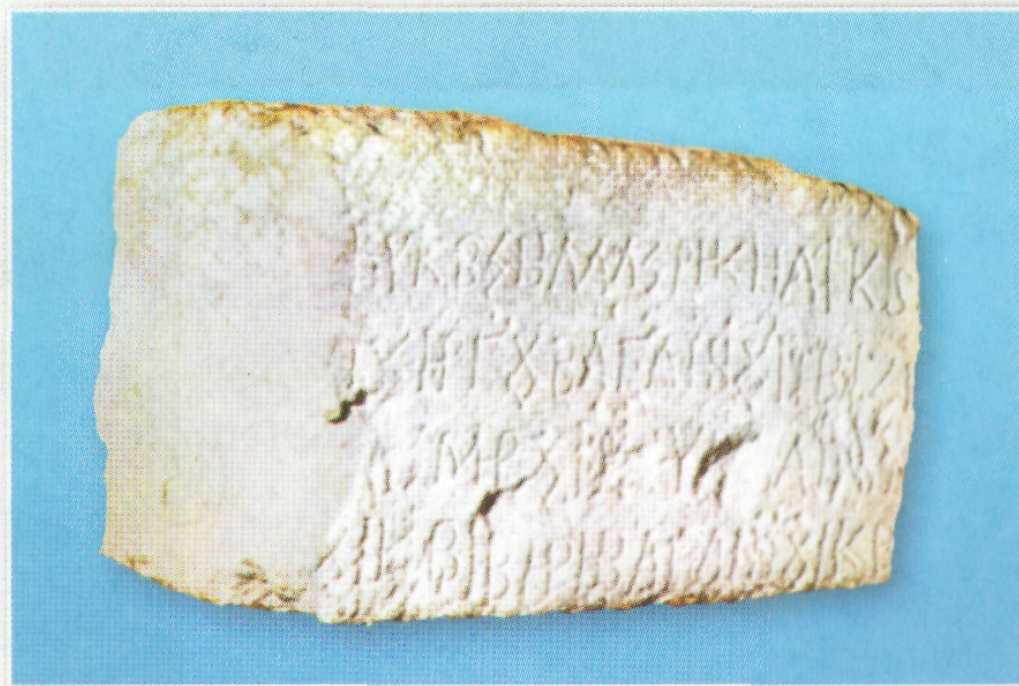
Die Hauptpforte
 der Festung



A tile with a representation of a medicine man 8th – 9th centuries



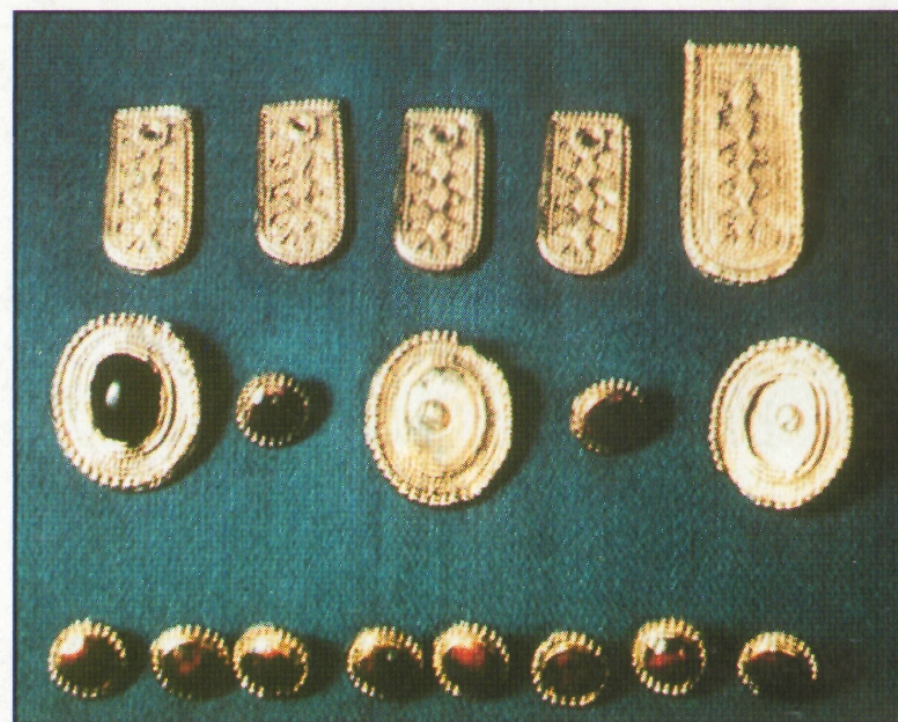
Old Bulgarian vessels, 8th – 10th centuries



A stone slab with an inventory inscription in Proto-Bulgarian, 8th – 9th centuries



The first gold belt ornaments,
8th century



The second gold belt ornaments,
9th century



Medieval rings and ear-rings



Medieval buckles, arrow heads, spears and war axes



Medieval farming tools



Byzantine coins from Madara



Silver coins from the time of King Ivan Alexander (1341 – 1371) and a coin from the time of King Ivan Shishman (1371 – 1395)



Medieval monastery complex, 9th century





The rock monastery, 12th – 14th centuries



THE ST PANTELEYMON ROCK CHURCH, 12th – 14th centuries

The rock church is part of the rock monastery, which numbered 150 – 170 cells for hermit monks. The church is a natural cave with an altar, which was obviously additionally hewn in the stone at the back. A violent earthquake and a fire have destroyed the church. In 1993 the church was sanctified, given the name of St Panteleymon and is used for worship now. The choice of the patron saint is not accidental – St Panteleymon was known as a healer and a medicine man. According to tradition the water dripping in the Big cave next to the chapel has healing properties. According to esoteric beliefs in the rock itself there is a powerful source of energy which is beneficial to human health.

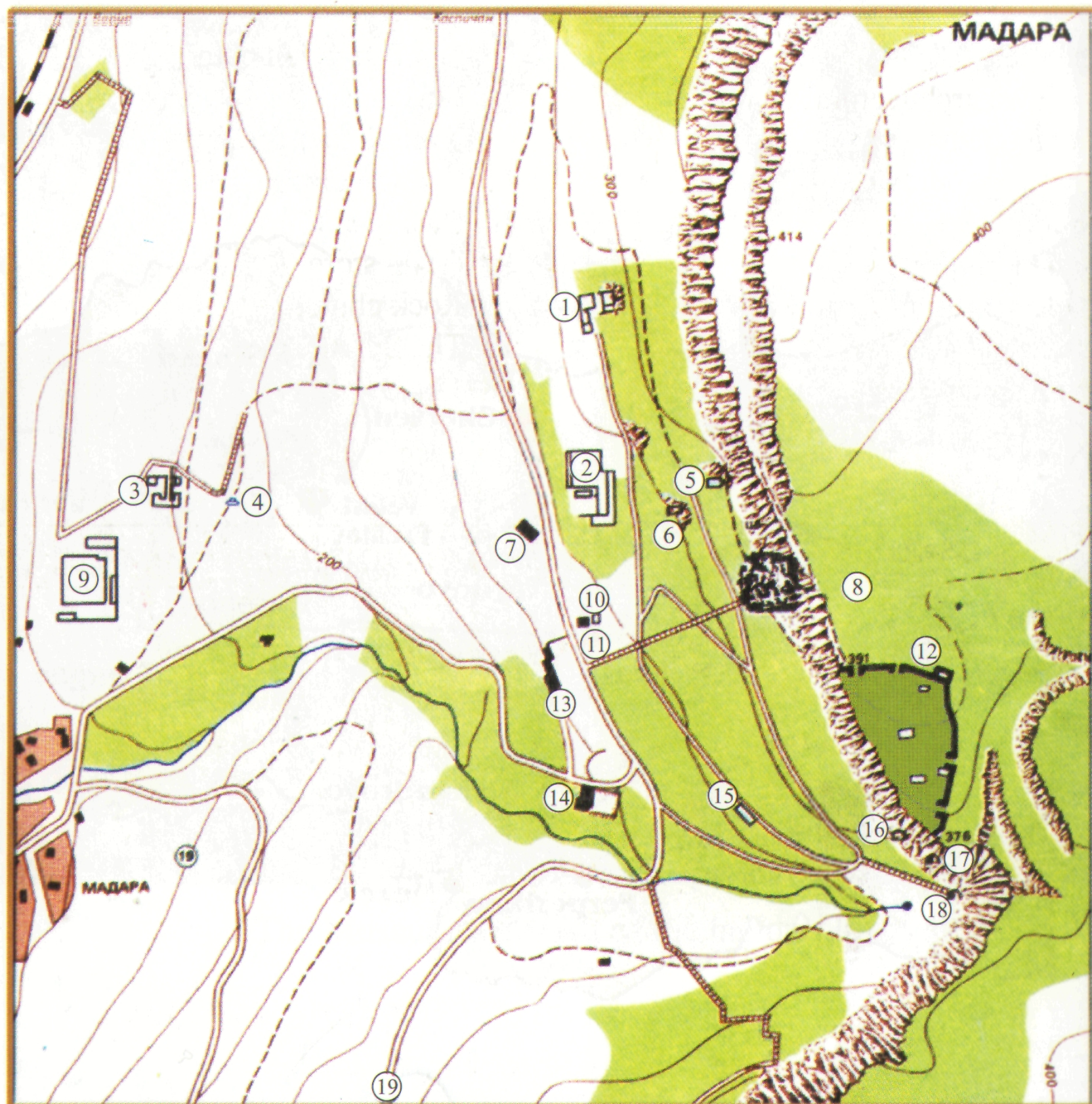


Painted ceramic dishes, 13th – 18th centuries



The Museum with part of the lapidarium





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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. The rock shrine | 10. Old Bulgarian bath |
| 2. Medieval architectural complex | 11. Museum |
| 3. Roman bath | 12. The Madara fortress |
| 4. Drinking fountain | 13. Parking place |
| 5. Church | 14. Restaurant |
| 6. Stone tomb | 15. Grain store |
| 7. Madarski konnik chalet | 16. Rock church |
| 8. The Madara Horseman | 17. The Small Cave |
| 9. The Roman Villa | 18. The Big Cave |



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MADARA

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